Department of Commerce

Division of Simplified Practice

Washington

MONTHLY NEWS BULLETIN May 15, 1925 No. 2

STEPPING ALONG WITH SIMPLIFICATION

Two events during the last month have forecasted a "Stepping on the gas" in the progress of Simplified Practice.

One of these was the further reduction of variety, by the soft wood lumber industry in connection with the broadening of the American Lumber Standardization movement.

The other was the development of a plan whereby technical, professional or other organizations may suscribe "in principle" to Simplified Practice Recommendations.

The first of these events is an outstanding demonstration of how a "give-and-take" series of conferences can move toward an objective which will be for the common good, even though the ramifications of an industry may be so great that the goal seems almost impossible of achievement.

The second unlocks a set of bars which has only recently been seen in its fullest perspective. It has been against the policy of some organizations and technical, or other bodies, to give their pledge of support to Simplified Practice as presented in its detailed manner connected with one industry or another. Notwithstanding this handicap of policy, the creation of a satisfactory form of pledge to enable them to support "in principle" now gives every industry the opportunity of securing support on a more formal and active basis than has been possible before.

Now the traffic sign of progress says "GO".

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The lumber industry has set a pace for other big industrial groups through its action on May 1, in lopping off still more excess variety in the soft wood field, supplementing the 60 per cent reduction made a year ago in yard lumber industry. Establishment of standards of nomenclature for various woods, of sizes and types for mouldings and timber, of uniform inspection and grading provisions, of terms and abbreviations which will clarify the relations between producer, distributer and user, holds promise of still further gains. And this promise is more than a

hint, for the general conference of the lumber industry was told that this year more than 90 per cent of the soft wood moved from the mills had been cut according to American Lumber Standards and that estimated savings are in the neighborhood of the $200,000,000 mark.

Closely allied to the extension of American Lumber Standards in the soft wood field has come increased activity on the part of those concerned with hard wood simplifications and standardization. The month has also seen another allied industry take initial steps for reduction of excess variety. The Northeastern millwork, sash and door industry has taken action to supplant a wide variety of items with uniform dimensions and to seek to harmonize their plans with the products of the industry in other parts of the country.

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Manufacturers of office equipment, and other concerned with uniform sizes of desks for offices, held a meeting during the month, and, it is indicated, will soon have a program to offer which will be important to every executive facing problems of efficient office management and the conservation of expensive floor space.

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Drop forged wrench manufacturers, who have been working on a program leading to a reduction of variety, held a further session during the month, and have shown a revival of interest in the problem.

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Two steps of importance to the ceramic industry of the country, taken within the last week, have been the adoption of Simplified Practice Recommendations covering dining car chinaware and hospital chinaware. These two groups, in general conferences with potteries and distributors, voted to include as a basis, the Hotel Chinaware Simplified Practice Recommendations, which number 100 items, as against several hundred previously made. Similar action is indicated as being about to take place in the marine field through the American Marine Standards Committee. The pottery manufacturers pushing the "Recognized lists" have launched aggressive sales campaigns with special inducements to buyers who confine themselves to the simplified schedule.

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The warm air furnace industry, confronted with the fact that literally hundreds of variations exist in various parts of their product -- for which variation there is no scientific or technical excuse -- have named a simplification committee to work out a set of more uniform dimensions.

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So many inquiries and requests for the Division's Cooperative services have been received, that it has been necessary to rule that future projects will be considered in their relative order of importance and the extent of possible benefits from their tentative program.

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Simplification is being seriously considered by the sterling silverware industry, and an initial conference of the manufacturers was held last week in Boston. Steps have been taken to bring about a survey and the formation of a committee to go more deeply into the possible advantages and into ways and means of weeidng out excess variety.

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University schools of business administration are paying attention to the work of the Division, and several communications have been receivee from such schools in various parts of the country. The first to undertake a closer relationship is the Harvard School of Business Administration which has arranged for A. E. Foote to deliver a lecture on the Simplification movement in its relation to business success.

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The undertaking of studies of Simplified Practice by an organization whose membership includes a wide range of manufacturers is an evidence of progress just called to the attention of the Division. This movement has been developed by the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, which has issued to its members a report of a committee on Simplification within the organization. This Committee finds that there is real value to be gained from the movement, and has urged its members to use the Division's services for their own benefit.

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The problem of varying sizes of food containers, which has been discussed at various meetings of distributing and producing bodies, has been brought to the point where a survey is being undertaken of the percentage of variations in five nominal sizes of cans. It has already come to the attention of the Division that some of these variations are as small as 1/16th inch in diameter. While it will probably be some time before the survey is completed and analyzed, the outcome will be one of importance to the food handling industries.

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With a wide variety of products entering into home ewuipment and construction already covered by Simplified Practice Recommendations, one of the latest recruits is the Heating and Piping Contractors National Association, which for some time has been making real progress in standardization. This organization, at its meeting in June in Detroit, will hear the report of a committee which has been considering the possible short

cuts to reduction of variety through Simplified Practice.

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Still another item of home equipment which has been considered by its manufacturers as susceptible of reduction in variety is that of bath room metal fixtures. Interest in this subject, aroused through association in other simplification studies, has led to the calling of a meeting of manufacturers to decide whether they will go through with a Simplified Practice Program.

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During the latter part of this month there will be a conference of manufacturers, distributors and users of paint and varnish brushes. At this time there will be presented a program which represents many months of careful study of the needs of the paint and varnish brush users.

This is a logical sequel to the action of the paint and varnish industry itself which last fall agreed to a program to limit the variety of colors and size of paint and varnish containers.

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Progress is reported in the efforts of the carton container industry to make about half the number of thicknesses of material now used in these products serve the purpose. The Division has been informed of the indorsement of the program by a number of shipper associations; and the subject was presented this week for the consideration of the National Retail Dry Goods Association.

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Another important meeting which is to take place within the next few days is the general conference of manufacturers, distributors and users of grocery paper bags. As previously stated, the simplification program also has been extended to include standards of cubical contents for any given size of bag; and the engineering sub-committee has developed instructions so that adjustments can be made by any manufacturer, regardless of the type of machinery he uses, to come within the scope of such standards of contents.